

Learning Activity: Reflection on Moral Distress and PEH

Description of Activity:	Street Nursing Team (SNT) students will explore the concept of moral distress as it relates to caring for people experiencing homelessness (PEH). Students will examine and reflect on the ethical and emotional complexities of providing immediate and short-term solutions to people experiencing homelessness (PEH). They will also explore ideas to strengthen their resilience, compassion, and advocacy as a student nurse on the SNT.					
Keywords:	People experiencing homelessness, moral distress, compassion fatigue, organizational and professional support, resilience, values, systems change theory, ethics, longitudinal impacts					
Type of activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Didactic <input type="checkbox"/> Simulation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clinical	Recommendation on when introduced in curriculum?	<input type="checkbox"/> Early <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mid <input type="checkbox"/> End	Suggested Course:	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Promotion /Assessment/ Fundamentals <input type="checkbox"/> Acute care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chronic care <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Population/ Community health <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Competency addressed:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1. Provide respectful, compassionate, person-centered care for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Evaluate clients for social determinants of health needs, including housing status and related aspects of safety, access to food, social support and other relevant domains <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Collaborate with client and appropriate Interprofessional community members to optimize health in PEH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. Advocate for improved health for PEH					
Learning Activity:	<p>Purpose: The purpose of this learning activity is to foster critical reflection and ethical awareness among Street Nursing Team (SNT) students as they engage with individuals experiencing homelessness (PEH). By exploring their values and emotional dimensions of providing short-term relief within the context of long-term systemic inequities, students will deepen their understanding of moral distress, social justice, and professional responsibility in caring for vulnerable populations.</p> <p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze how short-term interventions relate to the systemic and structural factors that perpetuate homelessness. Reflect on their own values and emotional responses to moral distress experienced in providing care for individuals experiencing homelessness. 					

3. Identify strategies to maintain professional resilience, empathy, and ethical engagement when confronted with complex public health and social justice issues.
4. Apply insights from reflection and research to inform compassionate, equitable, and advocacy-oriented nursing practice in community and street outreach settings.

Activity: Student is to complete the following assignment:

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Engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness often centers on meeting immediate needs—such as distributing food, handwarmers, or hygiene supplies—while recognizing that these actions do not address the root causes of homelessness.

Research information on one of the following questions listed below. What did you learn? Why is this important to you as a person (i.e., think about your values) and as a practitioner? How will you apply this?

1. How do short-term interventions, such as the distribution of food and handwarmers, contribute to or detract from addressing the systemic and structural factors that perpetuate homelessness. In your response, consider both the potential benefits and limitations of these temporary measures within the broader context of public health and social justice.
2. Reflect on the emotional and ethical challenges that may arise from providing immediate relief without being able to resolve the larger issue of homelessness. How can healthcare professionals reconcile the desire to create meaningful change with the reality of systemic complexity? Discuss strategies that can help maintain professional resilience, empathy, and sustained engagement in this work.

Time Required:	Student preparation: 3 hrs. 1 hr. for discussion		
Preparation of the student:	<p>Students will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read article listed in resources. 2. Complete the assigned reflection questions. (See above in <i>Learning Activity</i>.) 3. Locate an article related to their reflection. 		
Assessment	<p>Formative: Debriefing at the end of the clinical day allows each student to reflect, share and learn. Each student responds to the following prompts:</p>	<p>Summative: Peer Sharing & Synthesis: After students have submitted their assignment, they can divide into small groups and synthesize common themes of moral distress and answers to the</p>	<p>Other Potential Assessment Strategies:</p> <p>1) Similar peer sharing and synthesis discussions relating what they learned from their</p>

	<p>1) "Right now I'm feeling..."</p> <p>2) "Today was challenging because..."</p> <p>3) "I wish that I could have..."</p> <p>4) "In a perfect world, ..."</p> <p>These discussions assess students' understanding of moral distress. Faculty can point out instances of moral distress. These discussions can also act as a catalyst to do the assignment.</p>	<p>questions posed in their assignment (#1 or #2).</p> <p>After that is completed, each group presents to the other.</p> <p>Further discussion can include more synthesis of both presentations.</p>	<p>assignment that addressed the learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) group activity or assignment focusing on advocating for policies to prevent moral distress.</p> <p>3) creating a personal resilience (i.e., self care) plan</p> <p>(Rubrics for activities not included.)</p>
Resources:	<p>Johnson, I.M., Doran, R., Gillmore, A., Garrett, K., Galvez, E., Kapur, I., Amen, Z., Alshehri, K. & Light, M. (2025). The costs of caring: I-poems as illustration of moral distress among professionals working with seriously ill homeless individuals. <i>American Journal of Qualitative Research</i>, 9(1), 124-143. https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/15882</p>		
Developed by:	Marilyn Gran-Moravec, MSN, RN		
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